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SUBJECT Nicaragua

DAN RATHER: Back at the U.N., the leadoff speaker for this final week of fortieth anniversary proceedings was Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega.

Pentagon correspondent David Martin reports that the flow of made-in-Russia weaponry may have resumed to beef up Ortega's military.

DAVID MARTIN: Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega dressed like a diplomat for his speech to the United Nations today, but he spoke like a warrior.

PRESIDENT DANIEL ORTEGA [translated]: The policy of state terrorism being practiced by the rulers of the United States will never bring Nicaragua to its knees.

MARTIN: According to Ortega, attacks by U.S.-backed Contra rebels have caused a total of one billion dollars in damage, while the U.S. trade embargo has cut off badly needed American markets for exports of Nicaraguan coffee and imports of spare parts for farm machinery.

PRESIDENT ORTEGA [translated]: Due to the continuation of the aggression committed by the United States Government against our country, the situation has worsened, to the point where though we should be exporting one billion dollars worth per year, we are only exporting 300 million dollars annually.

MARTIN: Ortega's hard-line rhetoric may soon be backed up by more Soviet-built weapons. U.S. intelligence has picked up signs that for the first time since last November the Soviet Union is shipping arms to Nicaragua.

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Soviet ships have been seen unloading military equipment, including T-55 tanks, at the Cuban port of Mariel. And some intelligence analysts believe they are being transferred there to Nicaraguan freighters, one of which has already taken its cargo home. Analysts think they have spotted ten tanks, but they cannot be certain because the cargo is covered by camouflage netting to confuse U.S. spy cameras passing overhead.

Analysts say this could be the start of a new Nicaraguan military buildup, but caution there is not yet enough evidence to prove it. Intelligence reports point out that Soviet Bloc ships have made more than two dozen port calls in Nicaragua so far this year, but until now they have delivered only trucks and other types of non-lethal military equipment.